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ISAAC VAN WERT
IN THE
REVOLUTIONARY WAR



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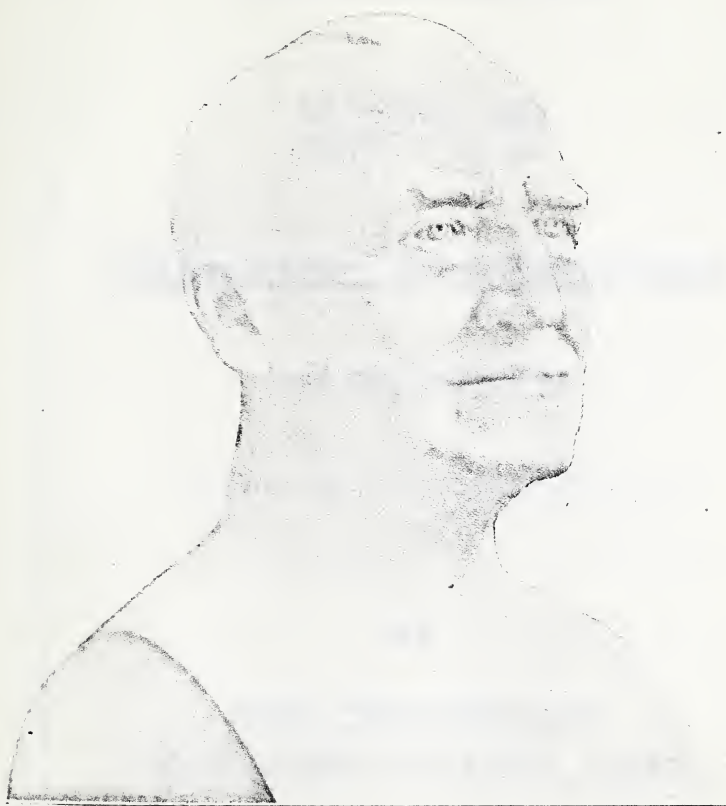
Exhibit 1

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PORTRAIT OF ISAAC VAN WERT

Taken from the Life Mask made by
John Henry Isaac Browere, at Tarrytown, New York, in 1826.
Until its discovery by Charles Henry Hart, there was
no likeness of him known to be in existence.

THE MEDAL

of which this
Booklet is an

Historical Explanation

was Presented to

Walter Gehres

by

THE CITIZENS OF
VAN WERT COUNTY, OHIO

in Grateful Recognition of Services
Rendered our County
and Country

BY E. B. WILKINSON

ARRANGED AND PRINTED BY
T. C. WILKINSON & SON
VAN WERT, OHIO
1919



AN WERT, Paulding, and Williams—three names suggesting the spirit of cherished liberty—names connected with a circumstance upon which hung the fate of a nation.

Even to the comparatively obscure locality of the United States—Van Wert, Van Wert County, Ohio—has the glory of one of the names been diffused and her inhabitants honored by its reflected rays.



TO REFRESH our memories with the story which led to the presentation of medals to the three patriots, Van Wert, Paulding, and Williams, we review some momentous history of the year 1780. In September of that year, was enacted the most dramatic scene of the Revolutionary War.

Early in August, 1780, General Benedict Arnold assumed command of West Point on the Hudson River, then the strongest and most important position in the United States, and regarded as the key to communication between the eastern and southern states.

The British Officer, Sir Henry Clinton, caused young John Andrè to be appointed Adjutant General of the British Army. In this capacity Andrè soon became engaged in a secret correspondence with General Benedict Arnold, the object of which was the betrayal of the American cause to the British Commander-in-Chief.

Arnold, as an officer in the American Army, had distinguished himself by brave and brilliant military movements. It is presumed that his feeling of injustice when Congress did not reward him according to his merit, first suggested to the mind of Arnold the idea of betraying his country.

Arnold, in furtherance of his treasonable designs, proposed to Clinton, whose headquarters were then in New York, to deliver this important fortress, West Point, into his hands, and, with a view of perfecting

arrangements for that purpose, demanded a personal interview with André. André accordingly repaired, on September 20th, to Dobbs Ferry, on the Hudson, and failing to meet Arnold there, went on board the British sloop of war, Vulture, which was anchored in the river, near that place.

On the morning of the 21st of September, André went ashore at a point about six miles south of Stony Point and had an interview with Arnold extending into the morning of the following day.

On departing for West Point, Arnold gave André a pass, authorizing John Anderson (the name assumed by André) to pass the American lines to White Plains, or below if he chose. Arnold also gave André six papers in his, Arnold's, own handwriting, which would enable the British General to direct his attacks against West Point with almost absolute certainty of success. These papers, at Arnold's suggestion, André concealed between the soles of his feet and his stockings.

André fully expected to return to New York on board the Vulture. In the meantime, the Vulture, having been fired upon by the American batteries, had withdrawn down the river, so this plan was now impossible. André then reluctantly crossed the river to Verplanck's Point, accompanied by one Joshua Smith, at whose home the interview with Arnold had taken place.

André passed the night of the 22nd with Smith at a place called Miller's, and early on the succeeding morning, was again in the saddle. Contrary to the

positive orders of Clinton, he was in disguise, having been prevailed upon by Arnold, in the event of taking a land route, to adopt one. Near Pine Bridge, Smith, becoming alarmed, left André to proceed on his way alone.

An incident of this last ride of André's is described by "a real daughter of the Revolution," Sarah Van Epps Harvey. She writes: "André was now fairly entered upon his cause, and his heart must have had its forebodings of evil, as, a little later, his faint-hearted host and guide, fearing to venture further from home, turned back and left him to proceed alone.

"The brightness of a September morn, the air laden with the spice of ripening foxgrapes and tingling with frosty suggestions of the nearness of Indian summer, served, in a measure, to remove the shadows of the dangers of the way, and he spurred briskly forward. Some miles of riding at length made him feel the pangs of hunger and he cast about for a place to obtain a hasty meal. As he neared the valley of the Croton River, he beheld a comfortable farm home beside the stream, and turning into the yard, he drew up his steed before the door. Reaching down, he raised the brass knocker (still preserved and doing service in the Van Epps Harvey family) and, when Dame Underhill, in Quaker garb, appeared, he said:

"I have had no breakfast: will you kindly give me something? I must eat without delay, for I am in haste to continue my journey."

"The pantry was nearly empty, for a visit by a

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band of 'cowboys' the day before had made serious inroads upon the housewife's supplies; but, when Dame Underhill replied, 'I cannot give thee anything but mush and milk,' he gladly accepted the simple repast.

"Hitching his horse, he sat for a few minutes in the family sitting room, where a huge chimney fireplace, piled high with blazing logs, gave out pleasant warmth and cheer. The meal completed, he offered pay, which was declined, and soon the unknown visitor was riding rapidly away toward Tarrytown, distant about sixteen miles.

"No doubt André considered he had completely hidden his identity, for he was disguised in a large cloak and citizen's overcoat, borrowed from Smith, his guide, but a gust of wind swept these aside and the curious eyes of the farm wife recognized the military uniform beneath. Indeed, this fact was not required to disclose his class, for his whole demeanor bespoke the officer and gentleman."

The writer concludes the episode—"At the time the incident was dismissed and would have been quickly forgotten had not the stirring events connected therewith brought it again to mind."

André went onward on the Tarrytown road, which was then known as neutral ground, a region devastated by marching armies from both parties. Between eleven and twelve o'clock André had arrived within half a mile of Tarrytown.

On this eventful morning when André crossed Pine Bridge, a little band of seven volunteers went

out near Tarrytown to prevent marauders driving away cattle to New York. Four of the party agreed to watch the road from the hill above, while the other three young men—in history, Isaac Van Wert, David Williams, and John Paulding—were to be concealed in the bushes by the stream near the post road. They had already permitted several persons, whom they knew, to pass. Presently, one of the men said: "There comes a gentleman-like looking man, who appears to be well dressed and has boots on, and whom you had better step out and stop, if you don't know him."

They saw a man approaching on a large brown horse which they afterwards observed as branded near the shoulder with "U. S. A." The rider was a slight, trim built man, about five feet and seven inches in height, with a bold military countenance and dark eyes.

One writer states that John Paulding was wearing a Hessian uniform which had been obtained for him by a colored woman to aid in his escape from the British prison. As Paulding stepped forward, a glance at this clothing, doubtless gave André the assurance that he was among friends.

A picture in history is now presented—a crucial moment when the trend of history hangs upon a tone, a word, a gesture. André, a young man of twenty-nine, a favorite in the British army, a gentleman of culture and an artist of more than ordinary ability, with that poise which comes from association with quick-witted men in a great metropolis, as London or Paris, matching wits with three young men, probably

unversed in the elegancies of language, but live Americans, with characters of sturdy honesty and untainted loyalty.

Challenged, André immediately checked his horse, when the following conversation ensued:

Paulding—"Which way are you going?"

André evaded answering by saying: "Gentlemen, I hope you belong to our party."

Paulding—"What party?"

André—"The Lower Party."

Paulding answered that he did, upon which André said, "I am a British officer, out in the country on particular business, and I hope you will not detain me a minute."



THE CAPTURE OF ANDRÉ
By Van Wert, Paulding and Williams

He was told to dismount.

André, endeavoring to make an appearance of jest at the situation, said, "God bless my soul; a man must do anything to get along."

Andrè then presented his pass from General Arnold, in which was the assumed name of John Anderson, but it was of no avail. Andrè seeing his pass was not going to be accepted, exclaimed, "You will get yourselves into trouble."

"We care not for that," was the response.

Having dismounted Andrè was searched and finally was ordered to take off his boots. At this he changed color. According to the testimony of Williams,—“We took him into the bushes, and ordered him to pull off his clothes, which he did; but on searching him narrowly we could not find any sort of writing. We told him to pull off his boots, which he seemed to be indifferent about; but we got one boot off, and searched in that boot, and could find nothing. But we found there were some papers in the bottom of his stocking next to his foot, on which we made him pull his stocking off, and found three papers wrapped up. Mr. Paulding looked at the contents, and said he was a spy. We then made him pull off his other boot, and there we found three more papers at the bottom of his foot within his stocking.”

These papers were marked “Contents—West Point.”

Andrè was now allowed to dress.

When asked from whom he got the papers, Andrè replied, “Of a man at Pine Bridge, a stranger to me.”

Andrè then said that for his liberty he would give his horse and equipage, his watch and one hundred guineas. This they refused unless he informed them where he obtained his manuscript. He declined to

comply, but again offered his horse, equipage and one thousand guineas. They were firm in their refusal and André increased his offer to ten thousand guineas and as many dry goods as they wished, which should be deposited wherever they desired, adding that they might keep him and send anyone to New York with his order so that they could obtain the ransom unmolested. To this they replied that it was useless to make any offer to them for his liberty, for he should not be permitted to go.



MAJOR ANDRÉ

From a pen sketch made by himself

Paulding afterwards said that upon asking André his name and being told it was John Anderson, after which he produced General Arnold's pass, they should have let him go had he not before called himself a British officer.

André was taken to Tappan, the headquarters of the Continental army.

Every effort was made by Clinton to save him.

It has been stated that André had not been eager for this undertaking, but that his sense of military duty impelled the attempt.

During the brief period of his captivity he endeared himself to all with whom he came in contact, by his amiable disposition and the charm of his conversation and manners.

Every fair opportunity was allowed by Washington to spare the life of André, but his offense, under military law, was unpardonable and the sentence—death on the scaffold—inexorable.

Washington, although admitting that André was more unfortunate than criminal, sent him before a court-martial, by which, notwithstanding a spirited defense, he was in consequence of his own admission condemned to death as a spy, and was executed on the second of October, 1780.

André had no fear of death. It was his earnest desire to be shot, being the mode of death most conformable to the feelings of a military man, and he had indulged the hope that this request would be granted. At the moment, therefore, when suddenly he came in view of the gallows, he involuntarily started backward and made a pause. "Why this emotion, sir?" said an officer by his side. Instantly recovering his composure, he said: "I am reconciled to my death, but I detest the mode. It will be but a momentary pang."

As Major André walked to his death, he betrayed no want of fortitude, but retained a complacent smile on his countenance and politely bowed to several

gentlemen whom he knew, which courtesy was respectfully returned.

His last words were: "I pray you to bear me witness that I meet my fate like a brave man." Thus died, in the bloom of life, the accomplished Major André, the pride of the Royal Army and the valued friend of Sir Henry Clinton.

There was a general desire on the part of the Americans to save the life of André, and Washington was deeply impressed with this feeling and ready to employ any measures to effect it, consistent with his



A BOWLDER
Marking the place of execution

public duty; however, he could not alter the sentence as he felt that would imply a doubt of André's guilt.

The King of England settled a pension upon the family of André; and, to wipe out the imputed stain produced by his death as a spy, the honor of knighthood was conferred upon his brother.

To Arnold, the consideration for the surrender of West Point and the control of the Hudson River to the

British army was to have been ten thousand pounds in gold and a commission as Brigadier-General in the British army.

Andrè's fate was lamented not less sincerely by American officers than by his own countrymen, while Arnold, though receiving material recompense for his treachery, was neither prosperous nor happy, and during his life in England was scorned by men of honor and finally sank into obscurity.



View of the place where Andre was captured

A monument marks the place and records the deeds of the patriots who refused Andrè's appeals and spurned the money offered for his release. Their impregnable loyalty preserved the American cause. Had Andrè been permitted to proceed, we people of America, instead of so proudly and independently waving the stars and stripes, would, no doubt, be paying homage to another flag.

Isaac Van Wert was born in Greenburgh, New York, 1760, and died May 23, 1828. For many years he was an efficient officer of the Greenburgh church and served as chorister until his death.

A monument was erected to his memory by the people of Westchester County. It is of handsome marble, upon ground attached to the Presbyterian church and near the lovely Nepera River. Its completion was celebrated in the presence of a large concourse of people on the eleventh of June, 1829. General Aaron Ward was the orator of the occasion.



Monument erected to the memory of Isaac Van Wert

The following are the inscriptions on this monument:

North Side:—"Here repose the mortal remains of Isaac Van Wert, an elder in the Greenburgh church, who died on the 23d of May, 1828, in the 69th year of his age. Having lived the life, he died the death, of the Christian."

South Side:—"The citizens of the county of Westchester erected this tomb in testimony of the high sense they entertained for the virtuous and patriotic conduct of their fellow citizen, as a memorial sacred to public gratitude."

East Side:—"Vincit Amor Patriae. Nearly half a century before this monument was built, the conscript fathers of America had, in the Senate chamber, voted that Isaac Van Wart was a faithful patriot, and in whom the love of country was invincible and this tomb bears testimony that the record is true."

West Side:—"Fidelity. On the 23d of September, 1780, Isaac Van Wart accompanied by John Paulding and David Williams, all farmers of the county of Westchester, intercepted Major André on his return from the American lines in the character of a spy, and, notwithstanding the large bribes offered them for his release, nobly disdained to sacrifice their country for gold, secured and carried him to the commanding officer of the district, whereby the dangerous and traitorous conspiracy of Arnold was brought to light, the insidious designs of the enemy baffled, the American Army saved, and our beloved country free."

Of the three patriots, we of Van Wert County, Ohio, are particularly interested in Van Wert, or Van Wart, as the name was originally spelled.

Miss Wilson, in charge of the Revolutionary War Division of the Congressional Library at Washington, says that Van Wert made no application for a pension or bounty lands on account of his services, but received from Congress an annuity.

Congress gave to each of André's captors a farm in Westchester County, New York, valued at \$2,500, and a life pension of \$200 per annum, together with an elegant silver medal, on one side of which was the inscription "Fidelity" and on the reverse the motto "Vincit Amor Patriae"—The Love of Country Conquers.

From a photostatic copy of Washington's letter of the 7th of October, 1780, delivered in a report to Congress, extracts are here quoted:

"I have the honor to inclose Congress a copy of the proceedings of a Board of General Officers (No. 1) in the case of Major André, Adjutant General to the British Army. This officer was executed in pursuance of the opinion of the Board, on Monday, the 2d inst., at 12 o'clock, at our late camp at Tappan. He acted with great candour, from the time he avowed himself after his capture, until he was executed. Congress will perceive by a copy of a letter I received from him, of the 1st inst., that it was his desire to be

shot, but the practice and usage of war, circumstanced as he was, were against the indulgence. At the bottom of the 6th page of the proceedings, an explanatory note is added, to prevent any suspicion being entertained injurious to Col. Sheldon who otherwise from the letter addressed to him, might be supposed to have been privy to the measures between General Arnold and Major André. If it should be the pleasure of Congress to publish the case, and which I would take the liberty to suggest may not be improper, it will be necessary for the explanatory note to be annexed.

"Besides these proceedings I transmit in the inclosure (No. 2) copies of sundry letters respecting the matters which are all that passed on the subject, not included in the proceedings. I would not suffer Mr. Elliot and Mr. Smith to land who came up to Dobbs Ferry, and the Southern prisoners, Congress will be pleased to decide on it themselves. They have the fullest knowledge of the present and what will be the future situation of our affairs, and can best judge of the conduct which the public good and humanity require to be pursued in the matter. For a variety of reasons I am, and profess myself wholly incompetent to determine in the case.

"I have now the pleasure to communicate the names of the three persons who captured Major André and who refused to release him notwithstanding the most earnest importunities and assurances of liberal reward on his part.. Their conduct merits our warmest esteem, and I beg leave to add that I think the

public will do well to make them a handsome gratuity. They have prevented, in all probability, our suffering one of the severest strokes that could have been meditated against us. Their names are John Paulding, David Williams and Isaac Van Wert."

G Washington.

The Committee of Congress to whom was referred General Washington's letter of the 7th of October, delivered in a report, upon the reading of which Congress came to the following resolution:

"Whereas, Congress have received information that John Paulding, David Williams, and Isaac Van Wert, three young volunteer militiamen of the State of New York, did on the 23rd day of September last, intercept Major John André, adjutant of the British Army, on his return from the American lines, in the character of a spy; and, notwithstanding the large bribes offered them for his release, nobly disdaining to sacrifice their country for the sake of gold, secured and conveyed him to the commanding officer of the district, whereby the dangerous and traitorous conspiracy of Benedict Arnold was brought to light, and the insidious designs of the enemy baffled, and the United States rescued from impending danger.

"Resolved, That Congress have a high sense of the virtuous and patriotic conduct of the said John Paulding, David Williams, and Isaac Van Wert.

"In testimony whereof,

"Ordered, That each of them receive annually, out of the public treasury 200 dollars in specie, or an equivalent in the current money of these states, during life; and that the Board of War procure for each of them a silver medal, on one side of which shall be a shield with this inscription, 'Fidelity,' and on the other the following motto: 'Vincit amor patriae,' and forward them to the Commander-in-Chief, who is requested to present the same, with a copy of this resolution, and the thanks of Congress for their fidelity and the eminent service they have rendered their country."

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Obverse of Medal



Reverse of Medal

From this bit of Revolutionary history did the names of three counties in Northwestern Ohio derive their origin—Van Wert, Paulding and Williams, and when, on April 1st, 1820, from old Indian territory, the founders of Van Wert County formed this subdivision of the state they named it Van Wert in honor of the subject of this memorial.

Isaac Van Wert's social position seems to have been established by the fact that he was a brother of Abraham Van Wart, Adjutant in the Continental line, whose son Henry married a sister of Washington Irving.

Van Wert and Williams were cousins, the latter's father and the former's mother having been brother and sister.

John Paulding was born in New York City in 1758. He served throughout the War of the Revolution, and was three times taken prisoner by the British. The City of New York caused a monument to be erected over his grave at Peekskill, where his nephew, William Paulding, then Mayor of New York City, made the dedicatory address.

David Williams was born in Tarrytown, October 21, 1754. He served under Montgomery in the expedition to Canada. A monument was erected to his memory, by the State of New York, near Schoharie Court House.

NOTE—The subject of this sketch spelled his name Van Wart. Washington and Congress spelled it Van Wert.

In Appreciation

To our distinguished citizen, Hon. G. M. Saltzgaber, Commissioner of Pensions, at Washington, D. C., it is a pleasure to give credit for information furnished, for it was through his efforts that it was possible to obtain these interesting reports and the reproduction of the die for the medal which was voted by Congress to Isaac Van Wert.

Courteous consideration was given to requests for information, by Hon. W. G. McAdoo, Secretary of the Treasury, and Herbert Putnam, Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C., and Hon. R. V. Woolley, Director of the Mint, Philadelphia, Pa., who secured and forwarded the electrotypes of the medal upon the request through Mr. Strait, Librarian, Bureau of Pensions, concerning which the following letter was addressed to Hon. G. M. Saltzgaber:

"Sir:—I take pleasure in transmitting herewith electrotypes of the Van Wert medal referred to in your letter of the 10th inst. The Engraver of the Mint at Philadelphia has made the copies from a specimen of the medal now in the numismatic collection of the mint at Philadelphia, and I am advised by the Superintendent of that institution that there are no dies in existence. The copy in the mint collection seems to be composed of two electrotypes joined together."

Col. J. C. L. Hamilton, historian, of Elmsford, New York, gave valuable assistance in securing the picture of the life mask of Van Wert, from which the plate used was made.

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